

Whole Coast Watches Flight of Seaplanes

Two U. S. Seaplanes Reach Halifax on Flight to Europe

START OF TRANSATLANTIC AIR TRIP

Continued from page 1

The afternoon awaited with keen expectancy the appearance of the advent of the seaplanes. At 8 o'clock the first definite tidings of their approach were received and crowds quickly gathered upon the hills. When the planes were sighted, cheers and whistles of factories and steamships let loose in an ear-splitting welcome, which the crowd echoed in an outburst of cheering.

Captain Hines, in command of the American naval forces here, went out on the naval tug Iroquois with a party of prominent citizens, including Consul Gaboriau and Lieutenant Colonel Thompson. The tug was anchored off the Lighthouse, and the planes, as they soared overhead, were greeted with waving flags and handkerchiefs and enthusiastic cheers. Mr. Gaboriau offered 500 cigarettes to the first person who sighted one of the planes, and the prize was won by Quartermaster Richards, U. S. N.

flagship of Commander John H. Towers, "admiral" of the transatlantic seaplanes, started on the first leg of her momentous aerial voyage. With a roar from the concentrated power of 16,000 horses, the huge ship tore through the haze-swept waters of Jamaica Bay. Fifty seconds later she literally leaped from the water into the air, terrific spouts of water and spray trailing behind her.

The haze had scarcely shadowed her graceful lines when Lieutenant Commander A. C. Read's NC-4 rushed through the water after her. The "four," too, rose with graceful ease in fifty seconds, and quickly pierced the misty shroud.

Then the NC-1, first of her type, and commanded by Lieutenant Commander P. N. L. Bellinger, rushed madly after her two sisters. Sixty seconds after her start she sprang into the air.

Wind Conditions Perfect

All three planes took off toward the southwest, in the opposite direction to which they had to fly. Five minutes after the first "take-off" the anxious watchers on the beach saw the three in majestic formation gradually emerge from the smoky black haze, headed due east.

They were flying splendidly, the twelve Liberty motors humming in the perfect union of smooth running. All the signs boded well for a rapid and successful flight to Halifax. The wind, but a gentle spring zephyr, was just sufficient to aid the giant craft without retarding their progress.

Behind them in the air one of the big P-5 L type of two-engine flying boats was acting as attendant. In her cockpit were the photographers of the navy, taking official photographs for the archives of the Navy Department.

The P-5 L, piloted by Gunner C. D. Griffin and Ensign J. R. Briggs, accompanied the NC seaplanes as far as Fire Island and then returned to Rockaway. There Griffin reported they had left the three transatlantic planes flying strong in a due easterly direction.

"The NC-1 was twenty miles off shore," said Griffin, "about 600 feet in the air. The NC-4 was flying ten miles off shore at an altitude of 500 feet, and the NC-3 between them at a distance of fifteen miles off shore and 800 feet high.

"We flew quite close and could see Commander Towers sitting in the cockpit, the commanding officer's cockpit in the nose of the NC-3. We semaphored to him, saying 'Good-by, good luck.' He replied with a wave of his handkerchief."

Orders for Flight Brief

The spirit in which the navy is making its attempt to fly across the Atlantic is vivid in the flying orders announced by Commander Towers just before the start. They read:

"Should any seaplane become separated from the formation it shall make the rest of its way along the course until normal conditions obtain. In case any seaplane is forced to come down the others to remain in the vicinity until a report of the other plane's condition is received. 'Sharp spirals and steep banks are forbidden.'

"If the commander's flagship is forced down, the others will be awaited as to which plane, if any, shall remain. If necessary the commander will use one of the other seaplanes as his flagship. A landing altitude of 1,000 feet will be maintained."

There are to be no aerial acrobatics nor reckless flying. The expedition is of a scientific nature and is to be conducted as such. Commander Towers remarked before stepping aboard his craft, "We are all assigned to special duty. That is all."

Early yesterday morning it looked as if the night would be postponed again. Conflicting reports regarding weather conditions were being received, which made decision on part of Commander Towers almost impossible.

First Plane Ordered Out

Promptly at 7:30, however, he ordered the NC-1 to be launched. She had lain there through the night, the mechanics worked feverishly tuning up the three new Liberty motors which had been installed in place of the old ones. A small launch carrying the three planes was towed out to sea. The planes had remained on the concrete base since their trial flights the night before.

She was hauled onto the platform of the marine railway and quickly launched. Then she was given her first trial flight with the new engines. Exactly at 8:30 o'clock she rose from the water, the three engines with her transatlantic crew aboard.

She rose to an altitude and flew in a manner that greatly pleased the other crews watching from the beach. During the flight the three planes were in perfect formation. Commander Towers, Lavender, chief radio officer, spoke over the wireless telephone to the other ships lying on the beach and to the four NC-3's engines were running splendidly.

Meanwhile on the beach the NC-1 was being swung on the calibrated compass lines to work out her compass. The launch was completely out of sight before 8 o'clock. Five minutes after 8 she took off in a preliminary trial flight with Commander Bellinger and Ensign Briggs.

Twenty-five minutes later she returned. At this moment the thick black haze had darkened the atmosphere to such an extent that the NC-1 was completely out of sight. The launch was completely out of sight before 8 o'clock. Five minutes after 8 she took off in a preliminary trial flight with Commander Bellinger and Ensign Briggs.

Wings Still Give Trouble

After a short run her blunt nose pushed up against the beach. The one of her pilots shouted to Commander Towers "She still has a tendency to roll over. I had to hold the stick firm all the time."

He referred to the difficulty experienced with the ailerons. This arose through the necessity of using the left wing of the NC-2 and the original wing of the NC-1, following the unfortunate accident to the right wing of the NC-1. Evidently the two do not quite balance. Commander Towers said this would not affect the flight, but would be a bigger strain on the pilot.

By 9:15 o'clock it was clear that Commander Towers was feeling very dubious. His usual imperturbability did not desert him, nor did his face give any indication of the thoughts that were passing through his mind. The only indication was the fact that he actually smoked two cigarettes in the course of as many hours. At frequent intervals he sent up small test balloons to observe weather conditions at various altitudes. These told him the wind was blowing from the north with a velocity of thirty miles an hour.

By 10 o'clock the launch was again announced the flight would be made as soon as the three seaplanes could get off.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when, floating noiselessly over the NC hangar at an altitude of only 100 feet, the navy's giant "blimp" C-4 hove in view—her Hispano-Suiza motors silenced. The crew leaned over and waved good-bye.

"Get out of the air; that's ours!" shouted one of the NC men, laughingly.

With a final wave the blimp rose



higher, circled the hangar thrice, and then departed on a Liberty Loan demonstration.

Designers of 'Planes See Start

About the beach were some 500 fortunate people; relatives, friends of the crews, officials, reporters and photographers. Among them were the men whose genius had designed and perfected the planes—now waiting patiently to see the fruition of their plans.

There stood Commander G. C. Westervelt and Lieutenant Commander Hunsaker, who, together with Commander H. C. Richardson, one of the pilots of the NC-3, were the three navy men responsible for designing the remarkable craft. Richardson is lucky because he has been given the opportunity to fly the product of his genius. In the eyes of both Westervelt and Hunsaker could be seen the desire for the same honor, but their duties keep them back.

Engineer Gilmore, of the Curtis Corporation, and his assistants, who cooperated with the three naval men in designing the craft, were also there to see the start.

Captain Noble E. Irwin, head of the Bureau of Operations, and his two daughters were there. One of them, Phyllis performed a pretty little exercise in the eyes of both Westervelt and Hunsaker could be seen the desire for the same honor, but their duties keep them back.

Others present included Margaret Jane, the eight-year-old daughter of Commander Richardson, and her mother, Mrs. Ida E. Harding, aunt of Lieutenant L. T. Barin, one of the pilots, came on from Norfolk, Va., to see the start.

Herbert L. Satterlee, member of the firm of J. P. Morgan, and a former Secretary of the Navy, and Mrs. Satterlee were present. In all about twelve women were present.

Rations for Trip Served

A few minutes after Commander Towers announced his decision Lieutenant J. L. Breese, beaming joyously, ran over with the ration of sandwiches and some bottles of hot coffee that are to sustain the crew as far as Halifax. He handed them up to the men on his boat the NC-4, the only one which did not make a preliminary spin.

So we start. The three "blimps" men did not have a chance to "get" him. They voiced their protest and he willingly accommodated them by performing the "spin" over again.

At 9:43 o'clock Commander Towers went aboard his flagship. The NC-4 was on the launching platform of the marine railway. In the water on her left was the NC-2, while the NC-3 was on her right, also in the water.

As he took his station in the commanding officer's cockpit Commander Towers waved his handkerchief to the people waiting on the beach:

"Goodby, boys. There is nothing that we can see now that will prevent us from being in Halifax by 6 o'clock, which will be the end of the first lap. The men are a fine set; we couldn't have better. We have been looking forward to this kind of weather for nearly a week. We are confident that the American navy seaplanes will be the first to cross the Atlantic Ocean."

Wireless Connection Assured

Lieutenant Commander R. A. Lavender, chief radio officer, in Commander Towers' plane, at the last moment said: "Our wireless instruments have been tested and are working tip top. We will be in touch with at least two destroyers by wireless all the time. If any apparatus should go wrong on one destroyer we can get in touch with another, or with land."

Lieutenant Commander Bellinger, commander of the NC-1, was boyishly happy. His flying suit has always been a thing of beauty and wonder to the rest of the crew, and with his beamy smile yesterday morning, it gave him a boyish look that seemed to belie the fact that he is one of the navy's first aviators.

He was smoking a big cigar when the newspapermen roused over to him for his last message. He said: "With the help of God, and in spite of the devil, we will do this little thing." His Southern accent smoothing out the determination of his phrase.

Lieutenant Commander A. C. Read, of the NC-4, a smaller, quieter and more serious man, said: "Nothing has

been overlooked in the construction of these planes. They'll do the trick."

Two minutes before 10 o'clock Commander Towers waved his hand in signal for the start. There followed immediately a tremendous roar as the motors on the three planes started up one after another. People on the beach instinctively put their hands to their ears to shut out the din.

A touch of extreme pathos marked the successful start. Just before Commander Towers boarded his plane, a friend of Chief Special Mechanic E. H. Howard telephoned him in the Brooklyn Naval Base Hospital that the start was about to be made.

At 10:05 o'clock night Howard's hand was cut off by the propeller of the NC-4, on which he was to have flown as engineer. A little later the friend telephoned the planes had left. The nurse answered the phone. The friend waited. Then came a feminine voice, punctuated by a sob, saying: "You will have to excuse him. He feels pretty bad."

At the last moment there were some changes in the crews of the three seaplanes. They finally got away as follows:

NC-3—Flagship
Commanding officer—Commander John H. Towers, commanding officer of the fleet.
Pilot—Commander H. C. Richardson.
Pilot—Lieutenant David H. McCullough.
Radio operator—Lieutenant Commander R. A. Lavender.
Engineer—Machinist L. R. Moore.
Reserve pilot—Lieutenant Braxton Rhodes, to go as far as Newfoundland.
Navigating instrument expert—Lieutenant Commander R. E. Byrd, to go as far as Newfoundland.

NC-1
Commanding officer—Lieutenant Commander P. N. L. Bellinger.
Pilot—Lieutenant L. T. Barin.
Pilot—Lieutenant L. T. Barin.
Reserve operator—Lieutenant Harry Sadenwater.
Engineer—Chief Machinist's Mate C. I. Kesler.
Radio operator—Machinist Rasmus Christensen, Newfoundland only.

NC-4
Commanding officer—Lieutenant Commander A. C. Read.
Pilot—Lieutenant E. F. Stone.
Pilot—W. K. Hinton.
Radio operator—Ensign R. C. Rodd.
Engineer—Chief Machinist's Mate E. S. Rhoads, in place of Howard, who lost his hand.
Reserve pilot—Lieutenant J. L. Breese, Newfoundland only.

Progress of Flight as Shown by Reports

THE three naval seaplanes—NC-1, NC-2 and NC-4—left the Naval Air Station, Rockaway, at 10 o'clock yesterday morning. They were reported along their course at the following times:

Place	Time	Distance from Rockaway, N. Y.
Fire Island	10:40	40
Montauk Point, L. I.	11:30	90
Block Island, R. I.	11:35	95
Naushon Island, Mass.	12:50	170
Hyannis Point, Mass.	1:10	190
Chatham, Mass.	1:28	208
Boston	1:31	211
First station ship	2:18	253
Second station ship	3:10	370
Third station ship	4:10	570
Cape Sable	5:10	430
Rockport, N. S.	6:30	440
Halifax Harbor	6:55	475
Landed at Halifax	7:00	540

"Here the NC-4 experienced engine trouble and proceeded more slowly on three engines. Nova Scotia time.

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